



The quest for a social mix

The Copenhagen experience

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12th International Symposium on Urban Planning and Environment
1th UPE Lusophone Symposium

THE QUEST FOR A SOCIAL MIX – THE COPENHAGEN EXPERIENCE

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engaging communities and citizens for
sustainable development

June 2 | 2016 | **LISBON, Portugal**



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Two predominant academic perspectives

- Social mix is a remedy for social exclusion, therefore a tool for social integration.
- Social mix is a euphemism for state-led gentrification.

Controversies on social segregation

- Bringing together on a single site a population homogeneous in its dispossession strengthens that dispossession, notably with respect to culture and cultural practices (Bourdieu, 1999).
- Enclaves of households belonging to the same social group (ethnicity, income etc.) are not in themselves a problem, especially when they are perceived positively (Young, 2002).

Lack of consensus

- The concentration of underprivileged families hinders opportunities of social integration (cf. peer effects, public service resources, stigmatisation);
- Residential proximity can favour contact, but does not necessarily promote social cooperation and a positive flow of capital from the middle class to the lower class (van Gent & Musterd, 2013).

Research aims and methods

- To examine the perceptions and beliefs of urban planners, policy makers, and academic regarding ideas and policies of social mix in Copenhagen.
- Face- to- face interviews with 14 officials and academics involved in policy-making, implementation, or evaluation of housing policies.
- The interviews were carried out in Copenhagen from May to July 2014.

The relevance of the context in which the research was conducted

- CPH: capital of a country that is among the most equal in the world in terms of both economic and social parameters (Alves, 2015);
- The left-wing municipality of Copenhagen has implemented a series of initiatives that aim to enhance the quality of life in disadvantaged neighbourhoods;
- A positive view of diversity that emphasizes: “the advantages of diversity and striving to create a city with room for diversity” (Andersen et al. 2014).

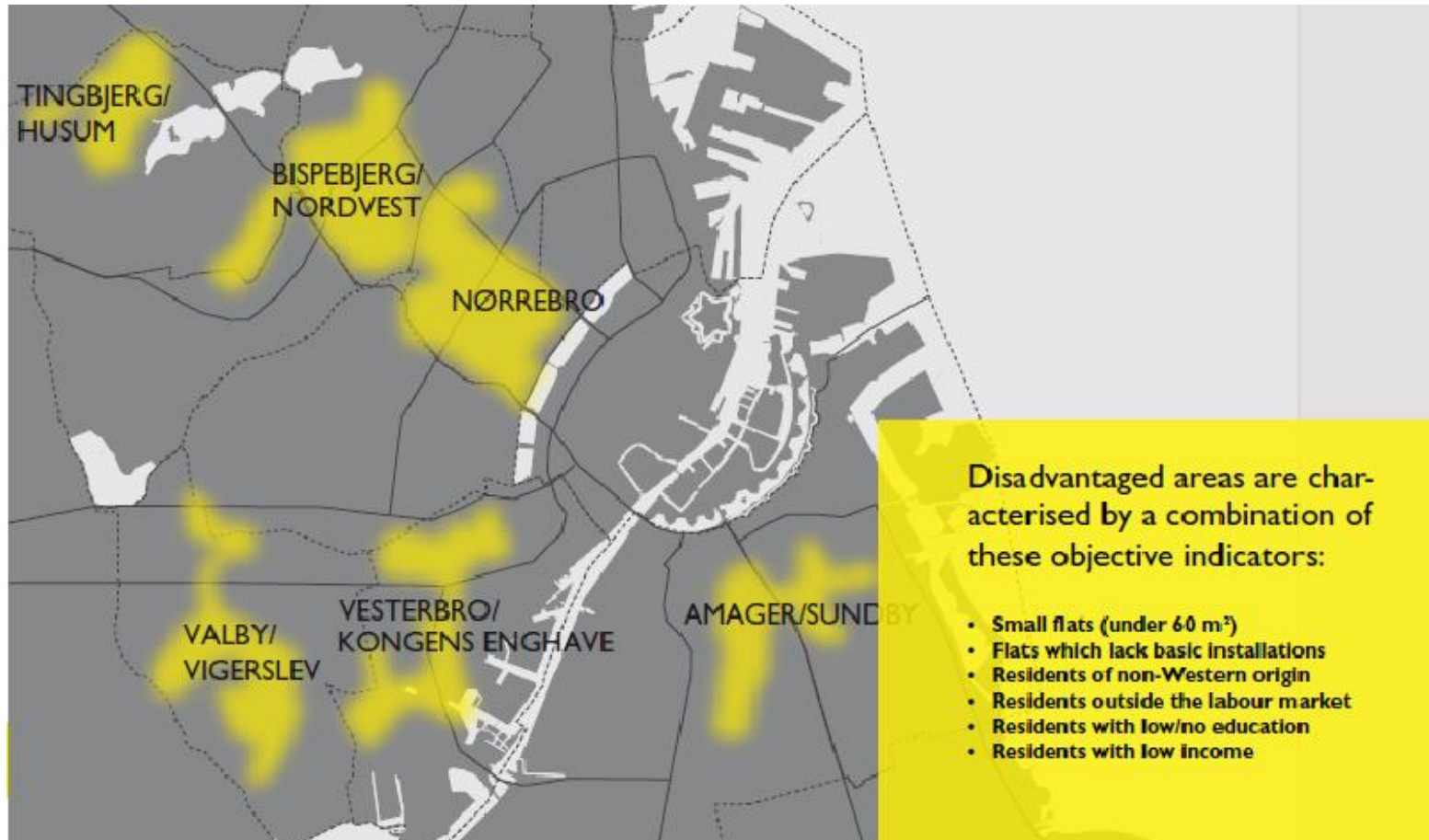
Segregation in Copenhagen

- Increasing concentration of low-income households in certain areas (Alves & Andersen, 2015);
- Increasing income segmentation in housing markets (Skifter- Andersen);
- Segregation and spatial inequality interacts because concentrations of low-income groups and ethnic minorities make these neighbourhoods less attractive.

Disadvantaged areas in Copenhagen

- The Municipal Planning Strategy for 2010 identifies six areas according to criteria that combine a number of physical demographic and economic indicators;
- These areas are the target of preferential treatment in terms of extra- resources and better sector cooperation in the municipality.

Six disadvantaged areas / area 2011



The Policy for Disadvantaged Areas of Copenhagen

Emphasizes the need to foster a diverse and yet cohesive and safe city with room for all

Policy for Disadvantaged Areas of Copenhagen (2011: 7)



One of the city's greatest strengths is its diversity and the differences that exist between its various districts – and this diversity is a strength on which we will continue to build. But children who grow up in Tingbjerg must have the same opportunities of a good childhood as children who grow up in Østerbro, and for example we cannot accept in the long run that residents in the north-western part of the city live seven years shorter than residents of the city centre.

Three different generations of Danish urban renewal policy

- 1930s and 1940s the policy of inner cities was mainly to demolish older housing of poor quality and to construct new housing estates. Later came a phase of architectural conservation but still only about places and physical structures not about people.
- 1990s - implementation of experimental area-based programmes in which links between social and physical interventions started to be realized.
- Since 1997 approaches that combined aid to both people and places and democratic processes of decision-making and implementation.

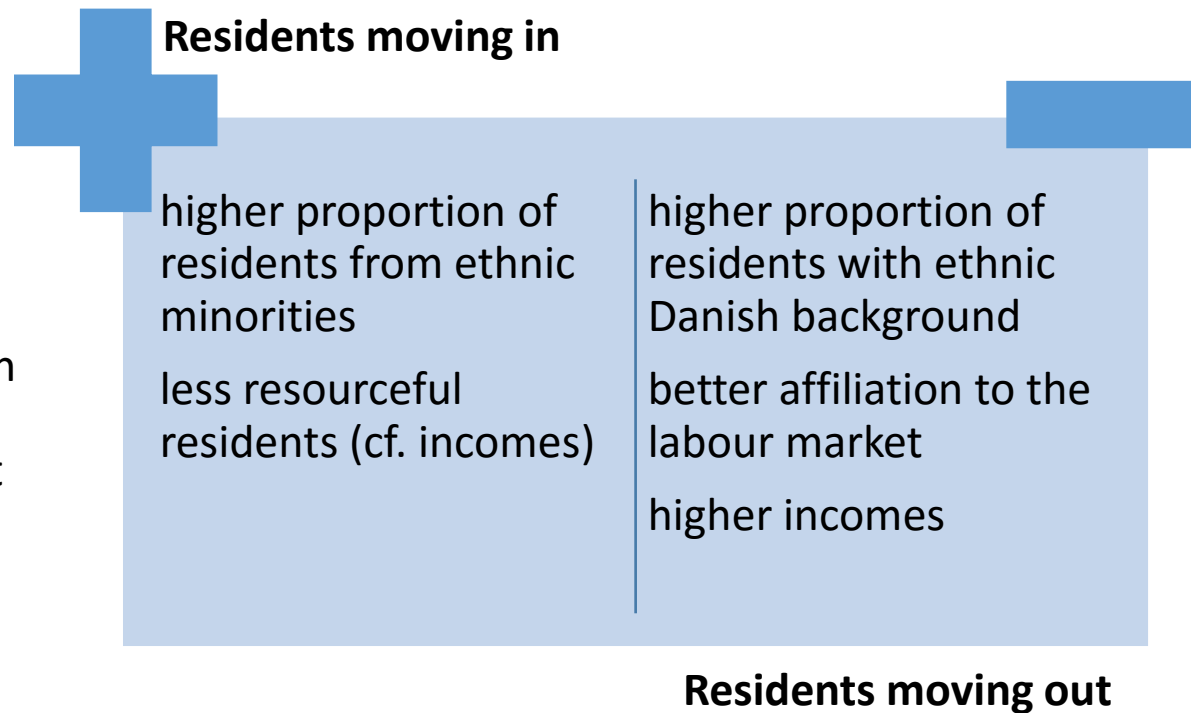
The example of Kvarterløft (1997)

- Prevented further negative escalation of the social, physical, and economic development of the estates (Skifter-Andersen, 2002).
- The renovation of buildings, public spaces, and community centres changed the image of the neighbourhoods, reducing the number of empty flats and problems of crime and vandalism.
- The reduction of rents compensated for what would otherwise be rent increases due to physical renovation and displacements.

The relationship between area-based intervention & social mix

Using Danish longitudinal data on the individual level for 1989–2006;

Christensen (2015) found that area-based intervention had no significant effect on social mix neither in respect to mix of educational background, employment mix, income mix nor ethnic mix.



Social geography in Copenhagen

- is the final outcome of a myriad decisions taken by organizations, authorities, private firms and individuals (Andersen 2012).
- Housing policies and urban planning affect:
 - the supply, price and quality of dwellings;
 - the attractiveness and distribution of different forms of tenure (cf. renting, ownership etc.) within the city;
 - Accessibility for the various social groups according to different criteria income, education, etc.

1. How do you understand and define social mix?

- I would define it as mix of people of different income levels, education levels, and maybe you could cite even more elements.
- Social mix is when different kinds of people can live together in a quarter. Social mix is a balance between social groups.
- Social mix is a political idea/concept (it is ideological and not based in facts (...)) there is actually no evidence to support the fact that social mix is better than no social mix.

2. What type of segregation is the most problematic in Copenhagen?

- I think socio-economic inequality is the most difficult thing, because you can see immigrants that are able to have a career, they find jobs but if socio-economic inequality persists then they also a problem.
- Definitely the socio-economic is more important in Copenhagen, (...) but there is an overlap of the economically disadvantaged neighbourhood and areas where there is a concentration of ethnic minorities.

3. What concerns and assumptions inform ideas of social mix in CPH?

- We have to admit that if the concentration of needy people is too high it won't work, so we have to find models of holding onto people with resources.
- If you look at a city and look at the all economic forces that there is in a city, you can see that if there is no regulation, rich people will chose the best and most exciting places and poor people will live in the worst places.

4. Can you identify initiatives that have been implemented to counteract spatial segregation?

- There is a great deal of pressure to follow market wishes but because plots are so scarce in Copenhagen we are in the luxurious position of being able to make a number of demands through our planning authority. That is also a political priority.
- We negotiate the public interest which is done not by force but by bilateral agreements. They want municipal cooperation in planning, authorization to build, and we negotiate a particular amount of social housing.

4. Can you identify initiatives that have been implemented to counteract spatial segregation?

- When there are more than 40% of people outside the labour market, we halt the influx of people from the municipality waiting list, and there is only access through the ordinary waiting list.
- This is what we call flexible allocation rules for renting, it basically means that if you have a job or are under 35 or over 55, or recently divorced then you can skip the list and go to areas we usually consider socially disadvantaged.

Conclusions

- Some scepticism about mixing policies;
- A general consensus that the most problematic type of segregation in Copenhagen is the socio-economic;
- A general consensus regarding the need of initiatives that promote area-based and city-wide social mix.

Conclusions

- The use of the planning system to promote mixed communities in regard to income and housing tenures (also in affluent neighbourhoods);
- In new developments, though site-by-site negotiations and agreements, the need to deliver affordable housing, also to those in worst conditions;
- In deprived neighbourhoods, though area-based regeneration and flexible forms of tenant allocation.

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